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Request for the inclusion of an additional sub-item in the agenda of the fifty-ninth session

Rendering assistance to the poor mountain countries to overcome obstacles in socio-economic and ecological areas

Letter dated 5 November 2004 from the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan, Costa Rica, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under item 88, entitled "Groups of countries in special situations", of an additional sub-item (c) entitled "Rendering assistance to the poor mountain countries to overcome obstacles in socio-economic and ecological areas".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum in support of the above request is attached (see annex).

(*Signed*) Ravan A. G. **Farhâdi**
Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Bruno Stagno **Ugarte**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Nurbek **Jeenbaev**
Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Murari Raj **Sharma**
Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations

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Annex

Explanatory memorandum submitted under rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. Mountain areas cover 26 per cent of the earth's land surface and are host to 12 per cent of its people. Mountains provide vital resources for both mountain and lowland people, including freshwater for at least one half of humanity and critical reserves of biodiversity, food, forests and minerals. At the same time, the people of mountain areas face major challenges. About one half of the world's approximately 700 million mountain inhabitants are vulnerable to food shortages and chronic malnutrition. Mountain people, in particular disadvantaged groups such as women and children, suffer more than others from the unequal distribution of assets and from conflict.

2. Mountain ecosystems are exceedingly diverse but fragile because of the steep slopes, altitude and extreme landscapes. Many of these ecosystems are being degraded both by farmers who are forced to apply unsustainable agricultural practices and by inappropriate development. The consequences of poverty and environmental degradation reach far beyond mountain communities: through war, terrorism, outflows of refugees, loss of human potential, drought, famine and escalating numbers of landslides, mudslides, catastrophic floods and other natural disasters in highlands and lowlands.

3. In this regard, we would like to underline the fact that there remain key challenges to implementing sustainable development and eradicating poverty in the mountain regions. There is a need to create international economic conditions that reflect the higher degree of vulnerability of mountain regions and their people. One of the most important means of solving the above-mentioned problems might be the adoption of measures by which all creditors, including the Paris and London clubs and others, provide debt relief to the developing mountain countries. The amounts exempted would allow for the sustainable development of the mountain regions.